

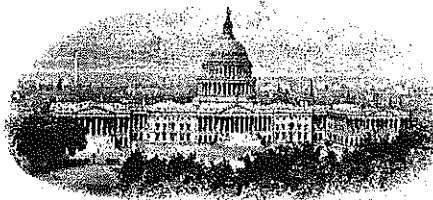
MICHAEL G. FITZPATRICK
8TH DISTRICT, PENNSYLVANIA

1516 LONGWORTH HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
(202) 225-4276

60 NORTH MAIN STREET
DOYLESTOWN, PA 18901
(215) 348-7511

ONE OXFORD VALLEY, SUITE 800
LANGHORNE, PA 19047
(215) 752-7711

www.house.gov/fitzpatrick



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-3808

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May 15, 2006

The Honorable George W. Bush
President of the United States
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Bush,

I am writing to express my concerns regarding the negative impact of today's deadline to enroll in the Medicare Part D prescription drug plan on my constituents in Pennsylvania's 8th Congressional District. Although CMS has made a tremendous effort to educate and enroll senior citizens into the new drug plan, millions of senior citizens are still struggling to understand the complexities of the various coverage options and are at risk of being unfairly penalized for not enrolling by today's deadline. I am most concerned about low-income seniors that will be penalized for failing to enroll in time. **At a minimum, the penalty should be waived for those low-income seniors that are in most need of assistance.**

I firmly believe that the new Medicare Part D drug plan will significantly assist senior citizens in lowering their health care costs. Millions of seniors are already enrolled and saving thousands of dollars annually on their prescription drug costs. Moreover, the average premium for individuals enrolling in the program is just \$25 per month – a significant reduction from original estimates of \$37 per month. Clearly, seniors are enrolling in the program and realizing tremendous benefits. That is why I believe it so important to make sure that every eligible senior citizen should have the opportunity to enroll in the program without fear of being penalized for failing to enroll or choosing the wrong plan.

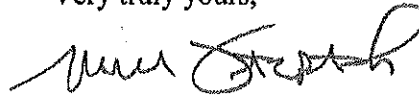
Over the past year, I held more than 15 town hall meetings and met with nearly four thousand senior citizens in my district in an effort to educate them on the new drug program. By far the most troubling issue for my constituents was the complexity of the new program. Seniors in my district continue to struggle to understand the benefits, coverage limits and enrollment process of the various plan options. In response, I introduced the Protecting Medicare Beneficiaries' Informed Choice Act of 2005, H.R.

4399. My bill extends the initial year enrollment period and additional six months, from May 15, 2006 until November 14, 2006. My bill would also expand the enrollment period an additional 4 1/2 months from November 15 until May 15 of the following year and all subsequent years. Most importantly, my bill would eliminate for 2 years the penalty for enrolling after the deadline.

As such, I am respectfully requesting that you direct CMS to extend the enrollment plan for the Medicare Part D prescription drug plan an additional six months to allow more of our nation's senior citizens the opportunity to benefit from this positive new program. **In the alternative, I would respectfully request that you direct CMS to waive any penalties for seniors that enroll after today's deadline – especially low-income seniors.**

On behalf of my constituents in Pennsylvania's 8th Congressional District, I want to thank you for your consideration of this request. I am hopeful, that you will take the appropriate action to ensure that senior citizens in my district, and across the country, have every available opportunity to enroll and benefit from this program. Should you have any questions or require additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Very truly yours,



MICHAEL G. FITZPATRICK
Member of Congress